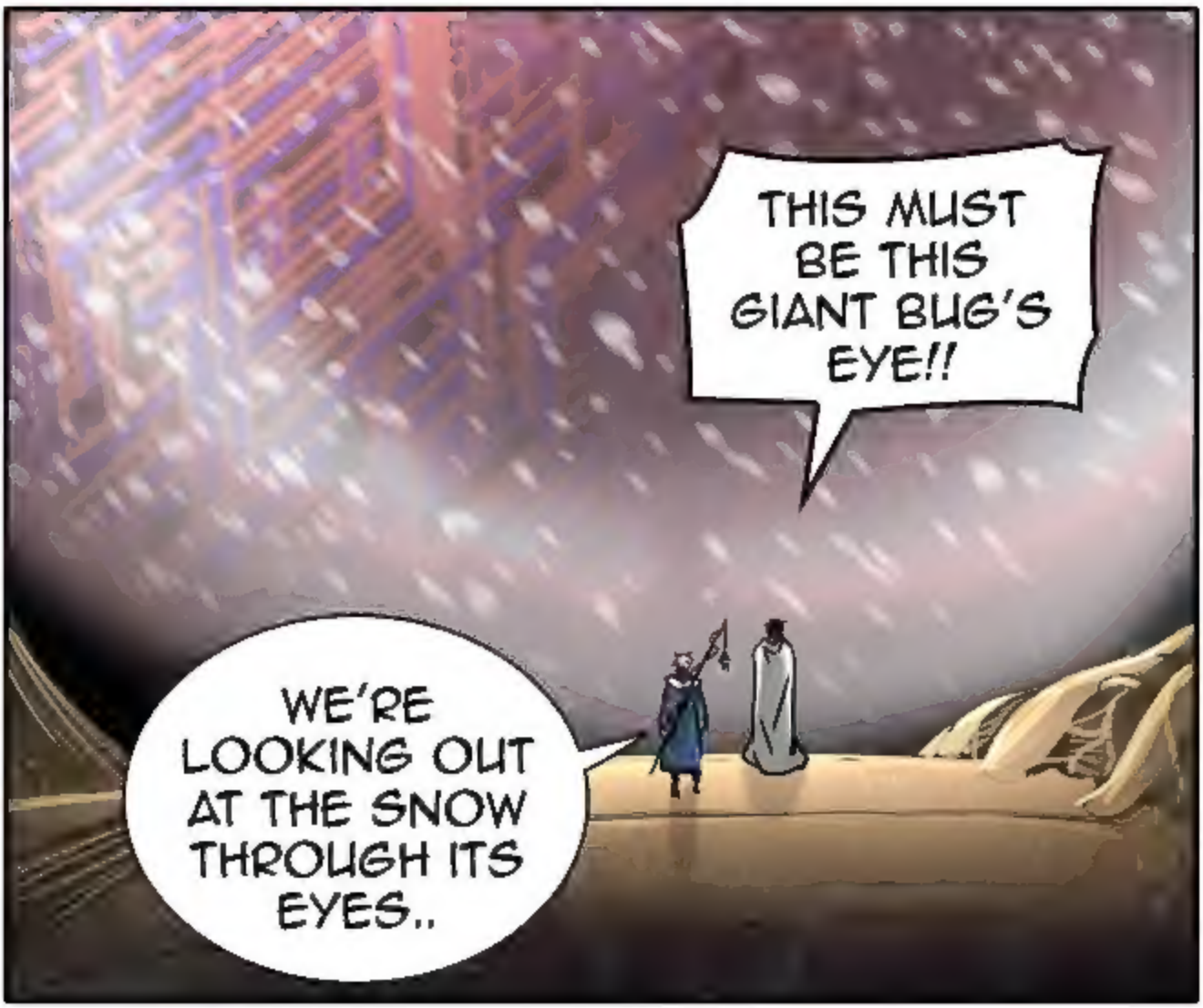
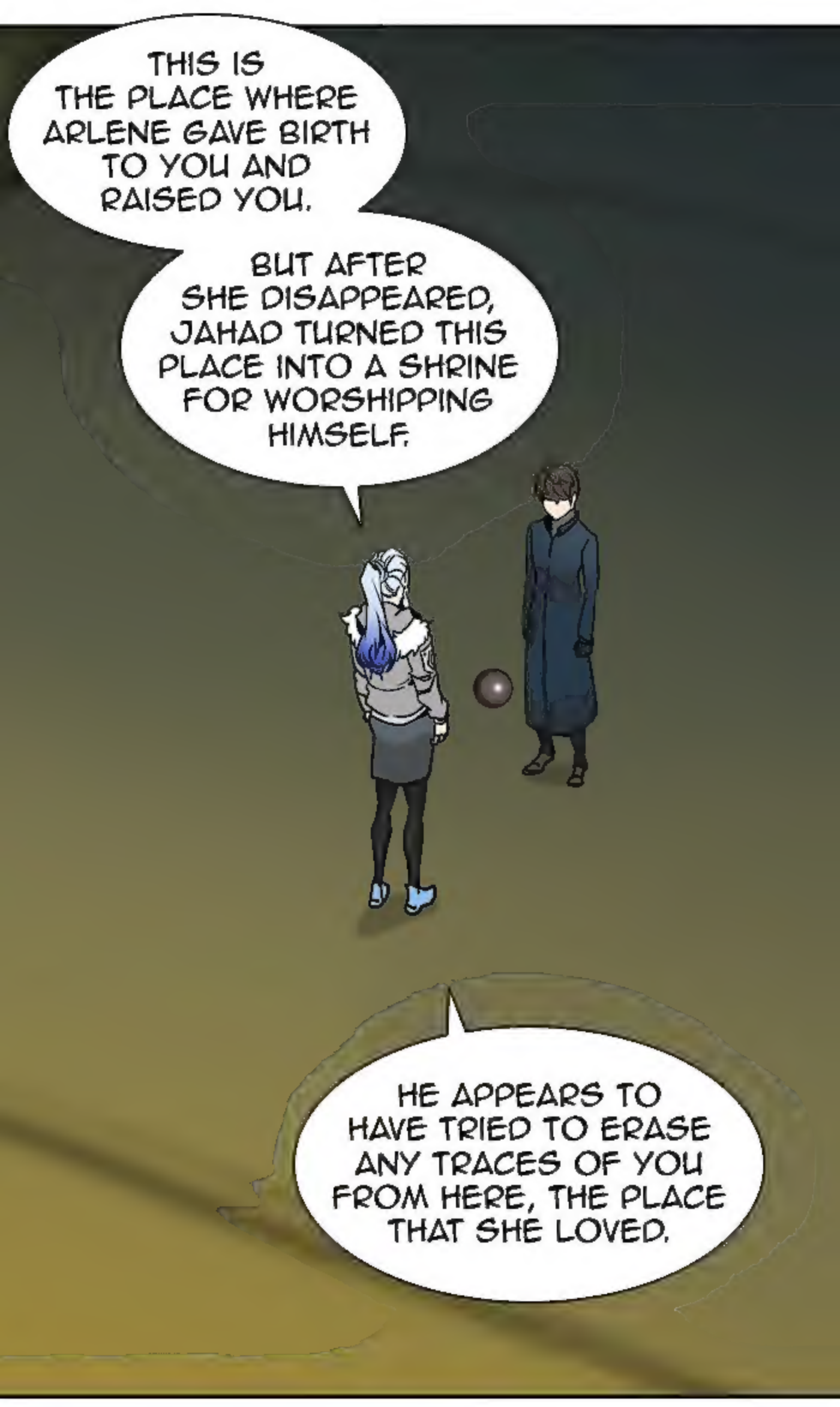
WHOA-
LOOK
AT THIS,
HOCKNEY-


THIS MUST BE THIS GIANT BUG'S EYE!!
WE'RE LOOKING OUT AT THE SNOW THROUGH ITS EYES..


THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE ARLENE GAVE BIRTH TO YOU AND RAISED YOU.
BUT AFTER SHE DISAPPEARED, JAHAD TURNED THIS PLACE INTO A SHRINE FOR WORSHIPPING HIMSELF.
HE APPEARS TO HAVE TRIED TO ERASE ANY TRACES OF YOU FROM HERE, THE PLACE THAT SHE LOVED.

CRACK
BUT UNABLE TO FORGIVE THIS LAND BEING DEFILED LIKE THAT,
HE APPEARED.

ENRYU.

AND
THAT DAY
A RED RAIN
FELL FROM
THE SKY HERE.

Talse uzer story by Slave. In. Utero

Tower of God

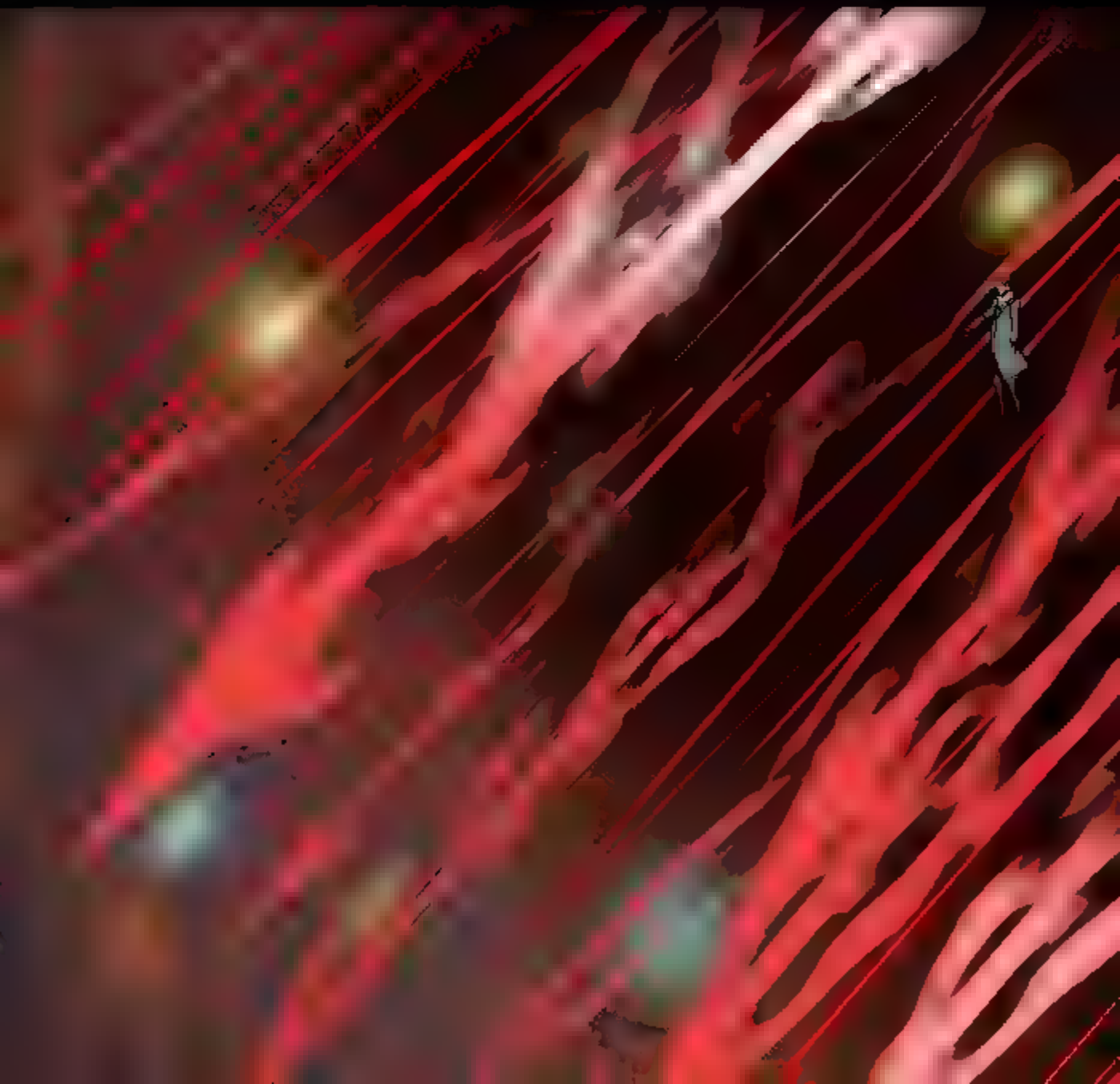
10

WHEN HE APPEARED HERE, THE FIRST THING THAT HE SAID WAS:
'ONLY THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN THE FALSE KING WILL REMAIN HERE AND FACE DEATH.'

HEARING WHAT ENRYU SAID, EVERYONE WAS FLUSTERED
BUT COULD SENSE THAT THIS WAS NO ORDINARY PERSON.

MANY PEOPLE
LEFT THIS PLACE

BUT JAHAD'S FANATICAL FOLLOWERS STARTED ATTACKING ENRYU.



THEN COUNTLESS SPEARS MADE OF RED SHINSU FELL ON THE BATTLEFIELD

NONE OF THE PEOPLE WHO HAD TRIED TO ATTACK ENRYU COULD WITHSTAND HIS ATTACK
AND THEY DROPPED TO THE GROUND LIKE FLIES.

AS SOON AS ENRYU HAD SWEPT AWAY ALL OF THE FANATICS,
FINALLY, THE ENRAGED ADMINISTRATOR OF THIS FLOOR APPEARED BEFORE ENRYU.

BUT NOT EVEN THE ADMINISTRATOR COULD DEFEAT HIM EASILY.

THE MASSIVE ADMINISTRATOR CHANGED HIS APPEARANCE WHILE FIGHTING HIM

BUT THE ADMINISTRATOR'S BLOOD AND FLESH, WHICH WE THOUGHT WERE INDESTRUCTIBLE, IMMORTAL AND INVINCIBLE,
WERE VICIOUSLY RIPPED AND TORN APART BY ENRYU'S ATTACKS.

NOT EVEN HIS MYSTERIOUS ABILITY TO FREELY CONTROL THE SHINSU ON THIS FLOOR WAS OF ANY USE AGAINST ENRYU.

DURING THEIR FIGHT, ALL OF THE MOUNTAINS, SEAS AND BUILDINGS ON THIS FLOOR WERE DESTROYED
AND THE GROUND TURNED RED.

ULTIMATELY, THE ADMINISTRATOR WAS DEFEATED AND PUT TO SLEEP
THUD

AND
THE SHINSU
HERE LOST ITS
MASTER.

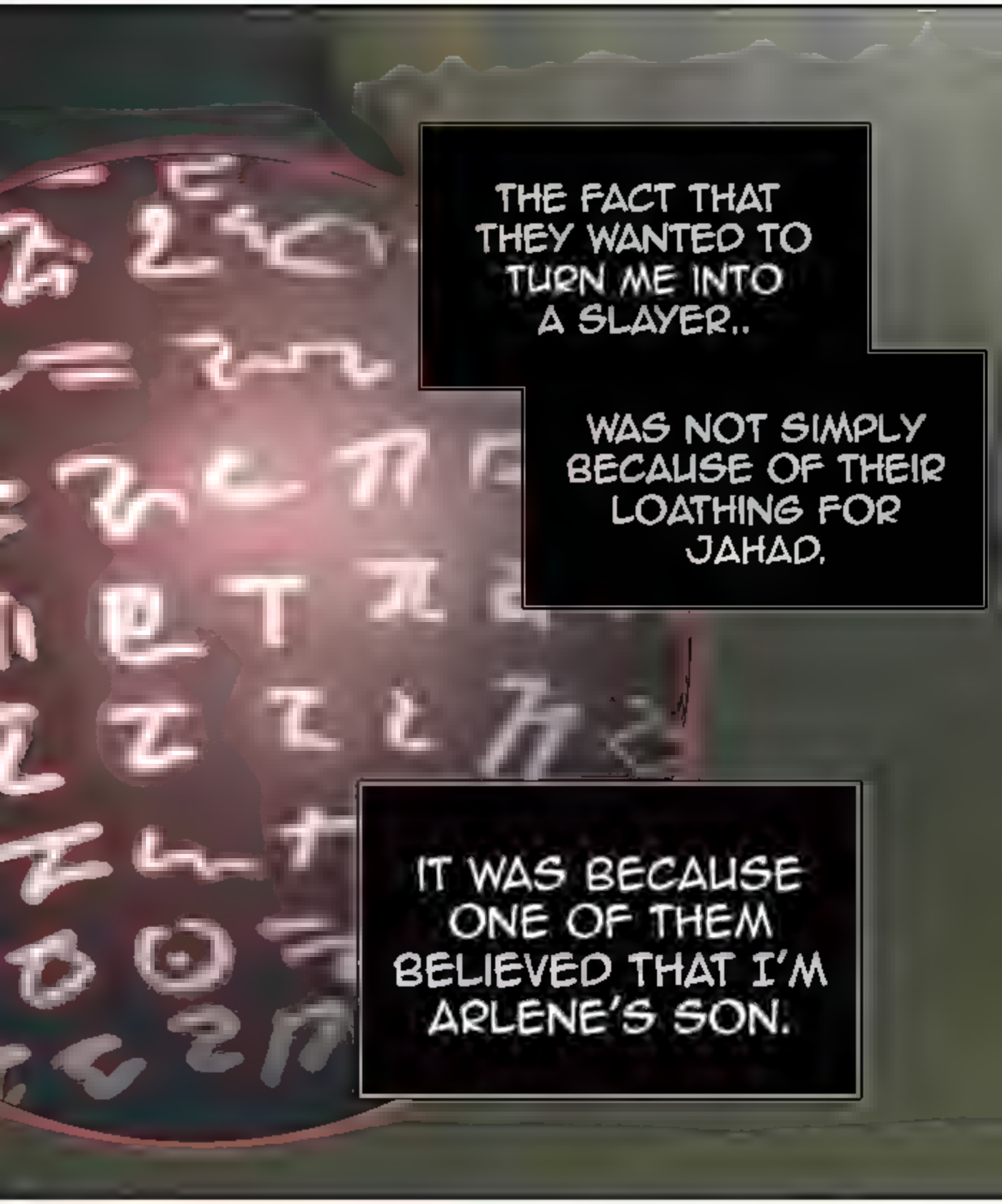
FOR A LONG TIME AFTER THAT, A RAIN OF SHINSU IS SAID TO HAVE FALLEN HERE.

AND THE WORLD CHANGED.
THIS PLACE BECAME KNOWN AS THE 'FLOOR OF DEATH'
AND RUMORS BEGAN CIRCULATING ON THE TOWER.

A DIVINE THORN ABLE TO KILL KING JAHAD.
THEY SAID THAT ENRYU HID THAT IN THIS PLACE AND THEN DISAPPEARED.
HAVING HEARD THOSE RUMORS, FUG STARTED LOOKING FOR THE THORN.

WHILE WAITING FOR SOMEONE TO OBTAIN THAT THORN AND SLASH KING JAHAD'S THROAT, I MEAN.
.....!!

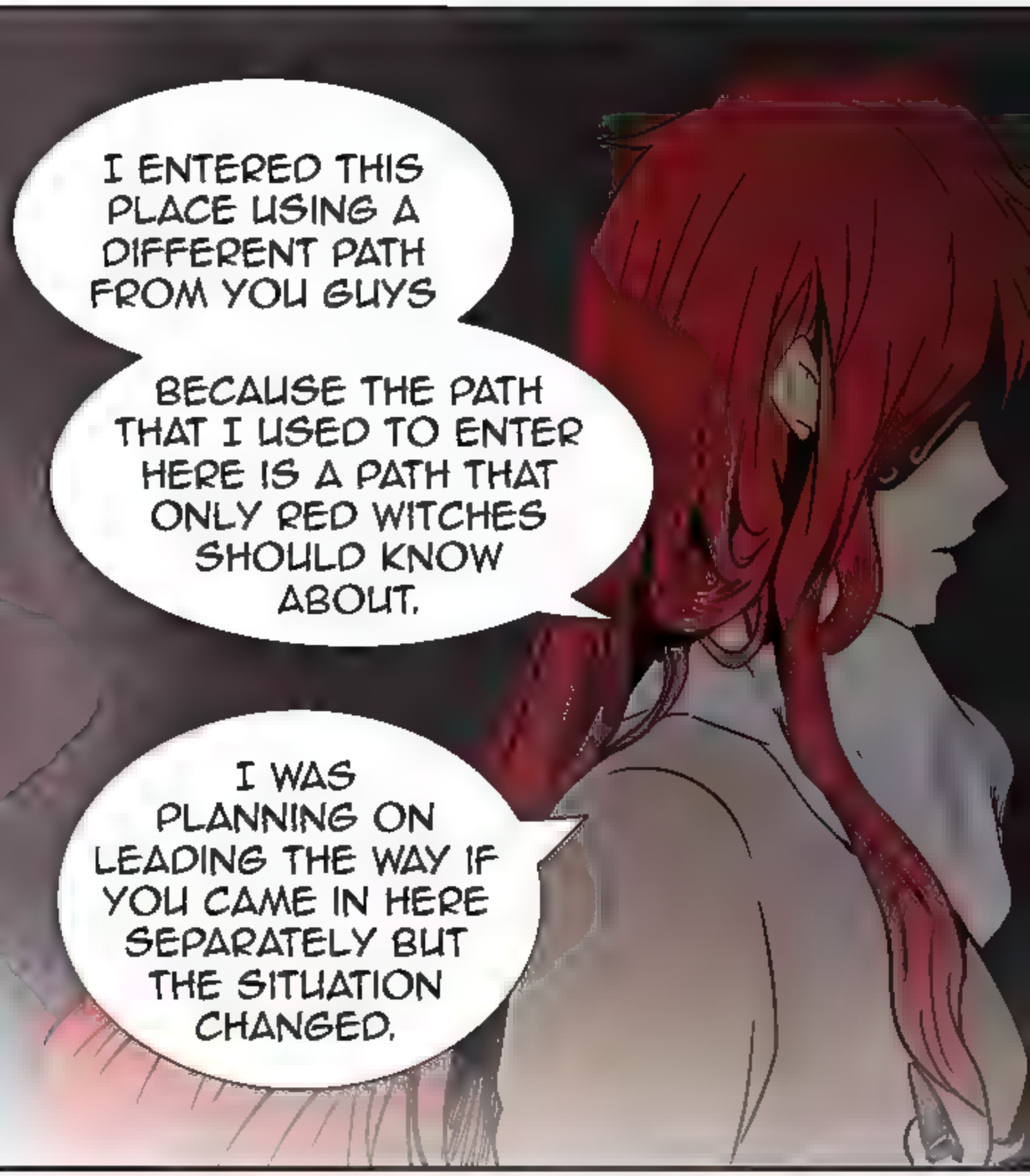
SO...
THAT'S WHY FUG GAVE ME THE THORN..


THE FACT THAT THEY WANTED TO TURN ME INTO A SLAYER..
WAS NOT SIMPLY BECAUSE OF THEIR LOATHING FOR JAHAD.
IT WAS BECAUSE ONE OF THEM BELIEVED THAT I'M ARLENE'S SON.

SO WAS I DESTINED TO BECOME A SLAYER FROM THE VERY START..?

IS MY DESTINY TO OBTAIN THE THORN AND SLAY KING JAHAD...?

YOU SAID THAT YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL US ABOUT HELL JOE.
IS THE STUFF THAT WE HEARD FROM THAT GIRL BEFORE NOT THE WHOLE STORY?
STEP-
STEP-
ACTUALLY, IT WAS ONLY WHEN I CAME HERE THAT I LEARNED ABOUT HELL JOE IN DETAIL FOR THE FIRST TIME.


I ENTERED THIS PLACE USING A DIFFERENT PATH FROM YOU GUYS
BECAUSE THE PATH THAT I USED TO ENTER HERE IS A PATH THAT ONLY RED WITCHES SHOULD KNOW ABOUT.
I WAS PLANNING ON LEADING THE WAY IF YOU CAME IN HERE SEPARATELY BUT THE SITUATION CHANGED.

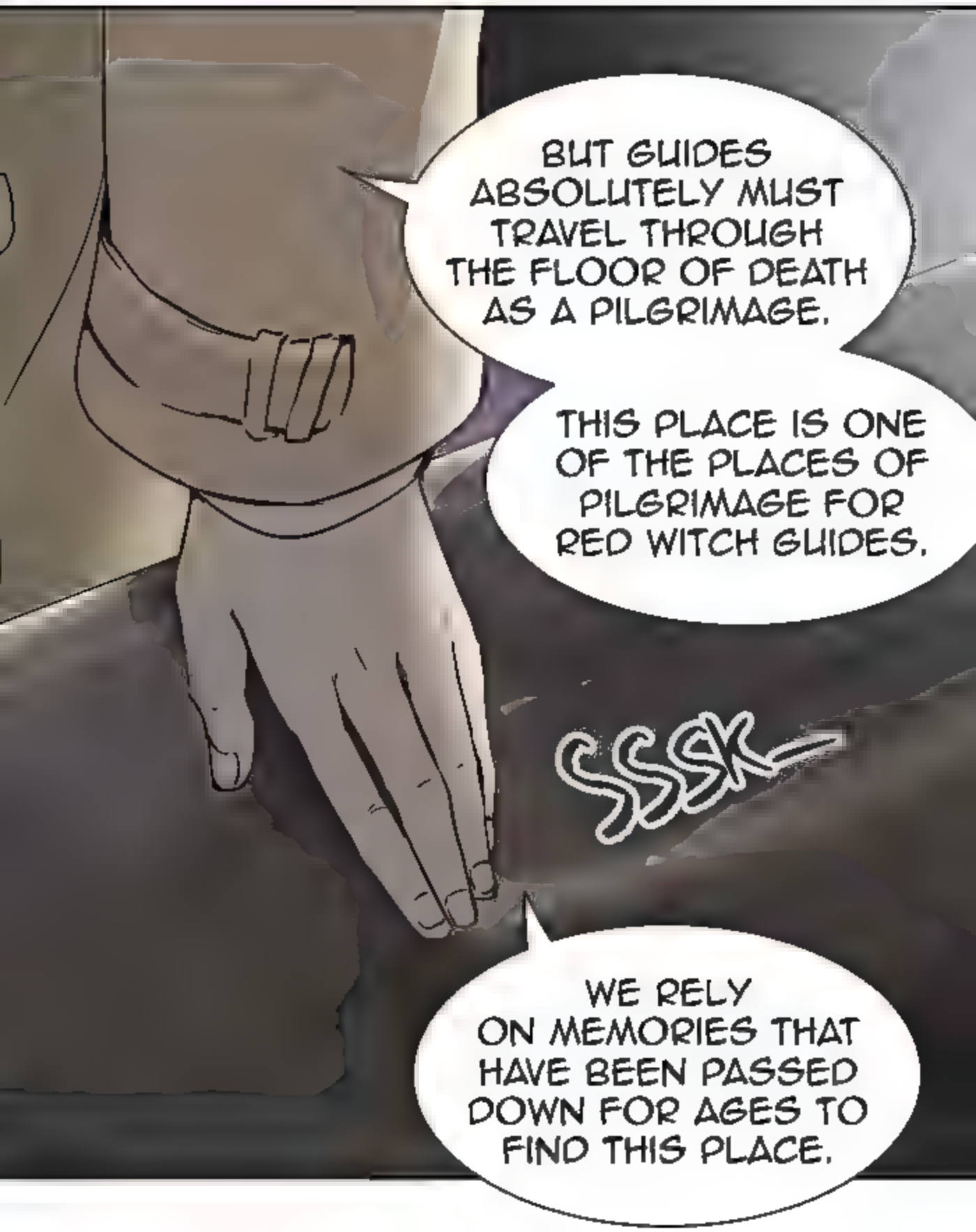
SO YOU HEARD ABOUT HELL JOE?
YES. IT SEEMS LIKE THEY WANT TO MAKE ME FIGHT HELL JOE
IN ORDER FOR BAM TO OBTAIN A FRAGMENT OF A THORN OR SOMETHING.

ACTUALLY, IT'S NOT EXACTLY BECAUSE OF VIOLE
THAT THEY WANT YOU TO GET RID OF HELL JOE.
...?

AS A RED WITCH GUIDE...
I HAVE A PERSONAL GRUDGE TOWARDS HIM.

SHE HAS...
A PERSONAL GRUDGE..?

A GRUDGE..
YOU MEAN THERE ARE PEOPLE OUT THERE WHO DO THINGS TO MAKE GUIDES RESENT THEM?
THIS FLOOR HAS NO ADMINISTRATOR.
GUIDES WITHOUT THE ABILITY TO PREDICT THE FUTURE ARE JUST REGULAR HUMANS.


BUT GUIDES ABSOLUTELY MUST TRAVEL THROUGH THE FLOOR OF DEATH AS A PILGRIMAGE.
THIS PLACE IS ONE OF THE PLACES OF PILGRIMAGE FOR RED WITCH GUIDES.
SSSK
WE RELY ON MEMORIES THAT HAVE BEEN PASSED DOWN FOR AGES TO FIND THIS PLACE.

SILVER DWARVES GO ON PILGRIMAGES TO A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PLACE, RIGHT?
YEAH. THE PLACE THAT I WENT TO WAS COMPLETELY IN RUINS.
BUT WE ALSO KNOW THAT THERE'S A PLACE LIKE THIS ON THE FLOOR OF DEATH.

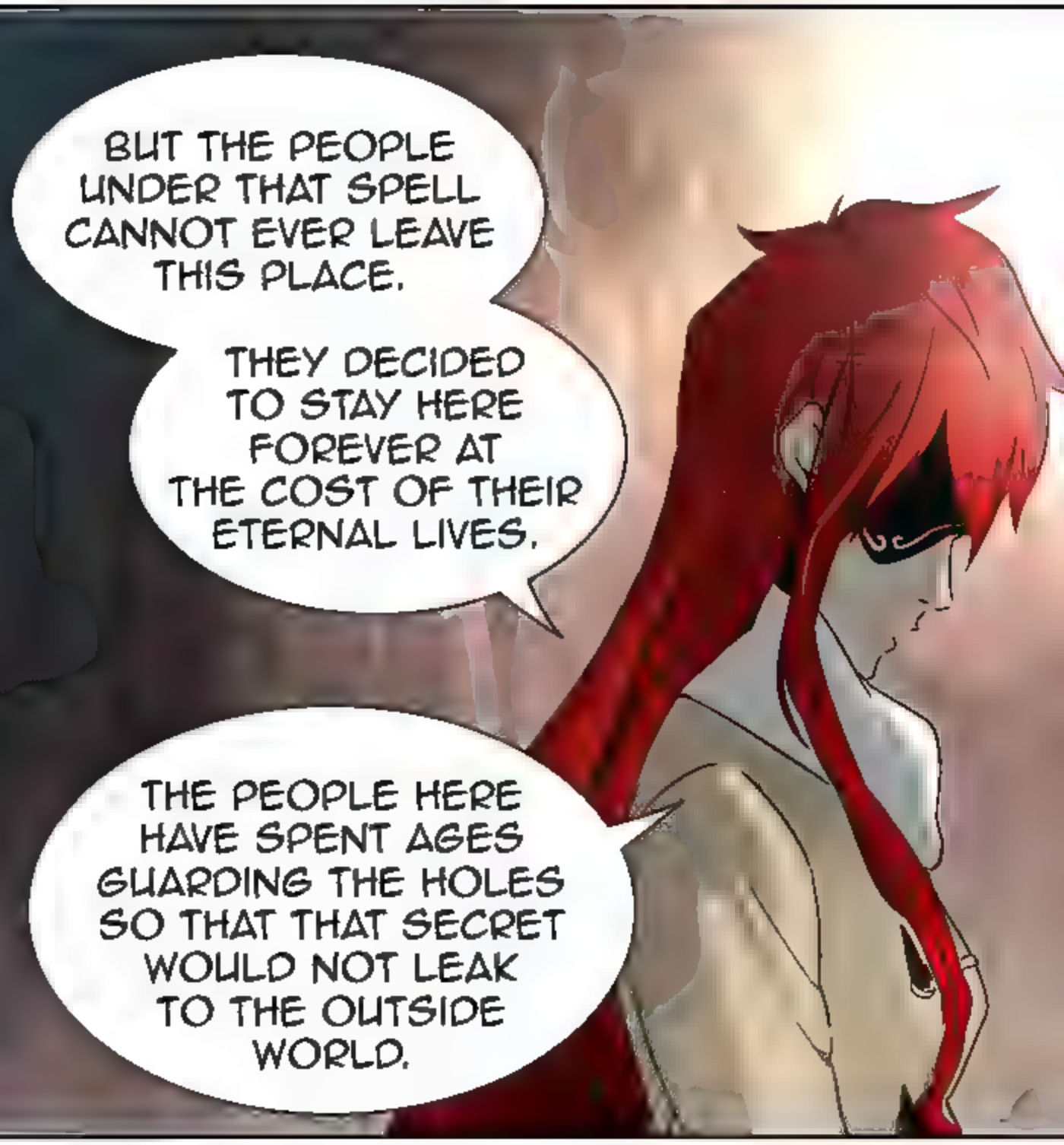
RIGHT.
THE FLOOR OF DEATH CHANGED COMPLETELY AFTER ENRYU APPEARED.
MOST OF THE PEOPLE WHO WERE ON THE FLOOR OF DEATH DIED.
IT WAS HARD FOR EVEN THE STRONGEST RANKERS TO SURVIVE IN THE SHINSU WITHOUT AN ADMINISTRATOR.

BUT THIS PLACE ALONE WAS LUCKY.
WE WERE LUCKY TO BE SURROUNDED BY THE ADMINISTRATOR'S BODY AND ISOLATED FROM THE OUTSIDE.
BUT THE PEOPLE WHO SURVIVED HERE HAD TO SUFFER FROM AGING AND A LACK OF FOOD.

STILL, THEY COULDN'T GO OUTSIDE.
BECAUSE JAHAD'S ARMY WAS KILLING ANY SURVIVORS ON THE FLOOR OF DEATH
IN ORDER TO STOP THE RUMORS ABOUT ENRYU FROM SPREADING.

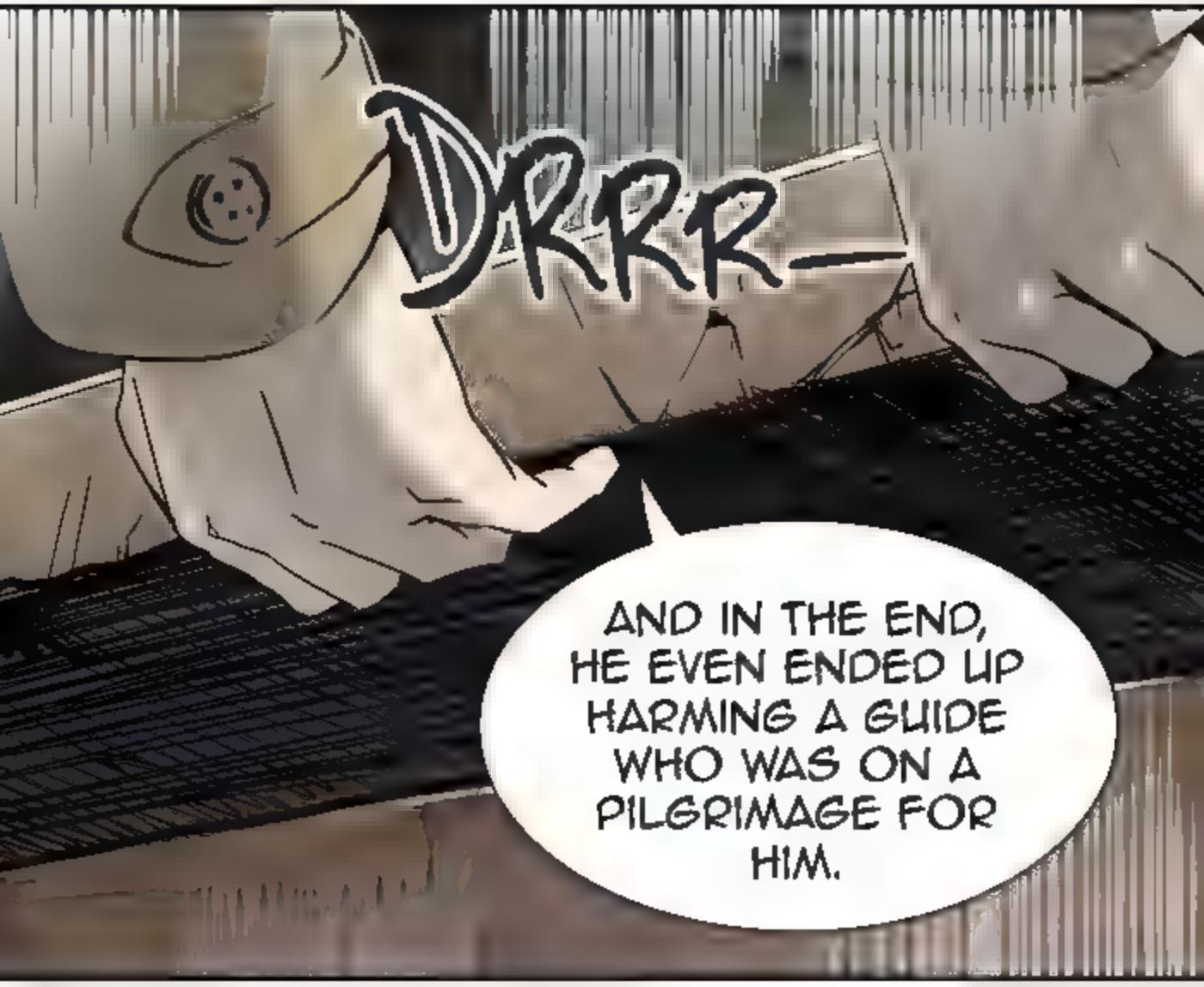
ULTIMATELY,
'DE SAH' AND 'DE JAH,'
THE HIGH RANKERS
WHO LEAD THIS PLACE,
FOUND A SOLUTION.

THEY USED THEIR MAGIC TO CREATE A PLACE CALLED THE 'SPIRIT ROOM' WHERE THEY STORED THE SOULS OF ALL CITIZENS
AND DEVELOPED A WAY FOR PEOPLE TO LIVE FOREVER WITHOUT AGING.


BUT THE PEOPLE UNDER THAT SPELL CANNOT EVER LEAVE THIS PLACE.
THEY DECIDED TO STAY HERE FOREVER AT THE COST OF THEIR ETERNAL LIVES.
THE PEOPLE HERE HAVE SPENT AGES GUARDING THE HOLES SO THAT THAT SECRET WOULD NOT LEAK TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

BUT EVERYTHING CHANGED WHEN JOE APPEARED.
HE WANTS TO BREAK THE SPELL AND LEAVE THIS PLACE.
ULTIMATELY, HE DROVE OUT DE SAH AND CONQUERED THE SOUTH CITY.

HE EVEN BROKE THE RULES OF THIS PLACE AND JOINED FORCES WITH AN OUTSIDE POWER.
FUG PROMISED TO GET HIM OUT OF HERE IF HE WORKED WITH SOME OF THEIR AGENTS AND GAVE THEM THE THORN FRAGMENTS.
HE WENT LOOKING FOR THE LAST FRAGMENT OF THE THORN

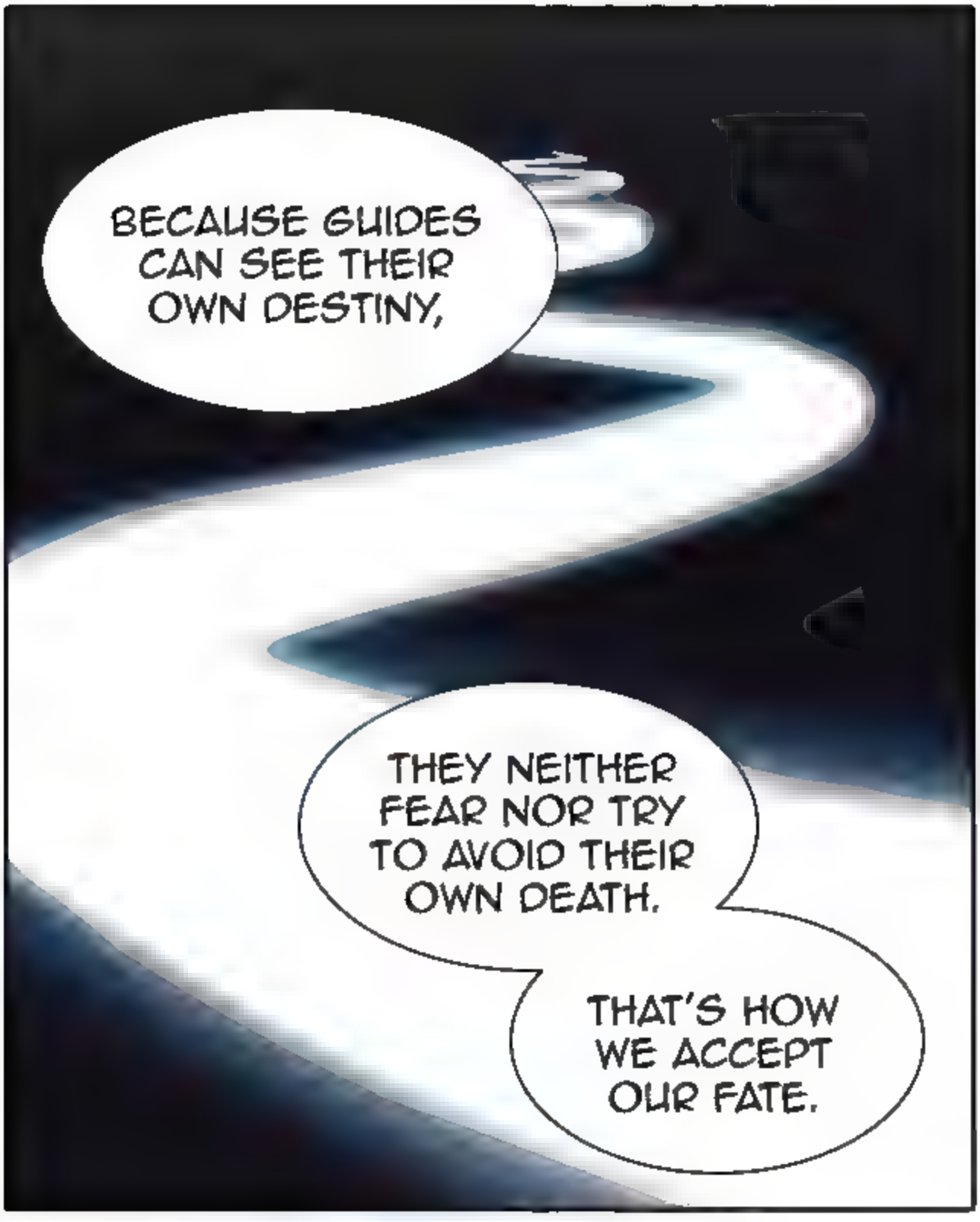

DRRR
AND IN THE END, HE EVEN ENDED UP HARMING A GUIDE WHO WAS ON A PILGRIMAGE FOR HIM.

THUD
...!!

THIS GUIDE WAS THE PREDECESSOR OF THE GIRL WHO BROUGHT YOU HERE.
HELL JOE CAUGHT HER WHILE ON A PILGRIMAGE AND PRESSURED HER TO LOOK FOR THE THORN FRAGMENT.
WHEN SHE REFUSED, HE STOLE HER VITALITY AND MADE HER SUFFER A CRUEL DEATH.

A RED...
WITCH..?!

IT LOOKS LIKE HELL JOE DIDN'T KNOW THAT GUIDES' ABILITIES DON'T WORK IN THIS PLACE.
.....
THAT MUST BE WHY HE THOUGHT THAT SHE WOULD BE ABLE TO FIND THE THORN FRAGMENT.

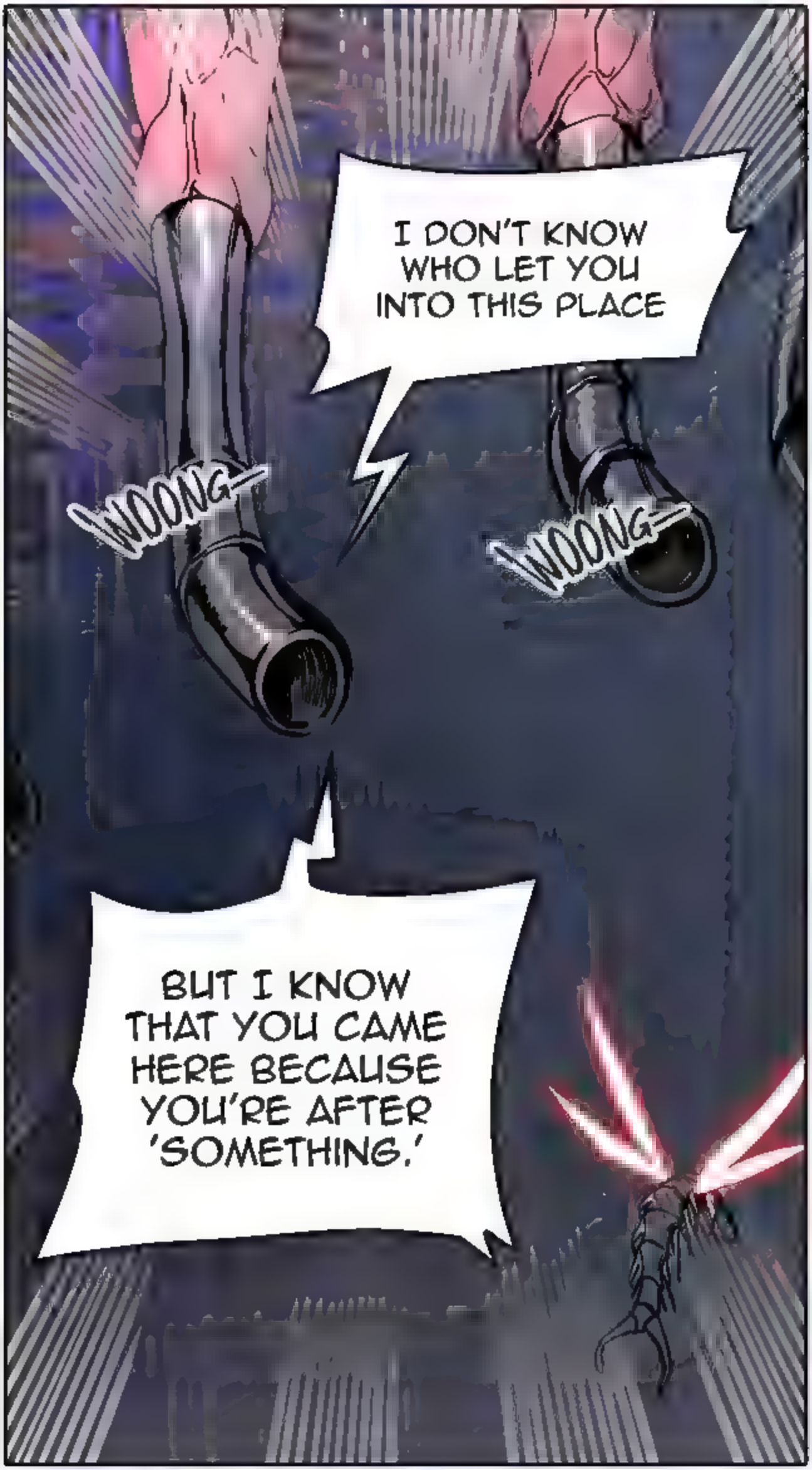

BECAUSE GUIDES CAN SEE THEIR OWN DESTINY,
THEY NEITHER FEAR NOR TRY TO AVOID THEIR OWN DEATH.
THAT'S HOW WE ACCEPT OUR FATE.

BUT SHE TRIED TO AVOID DEATH.
HAVING BEEN CAUGHT BY HELL JOE AND DRAGGED TO HIS CASTLE,
SHE IS SAID TO HAVE DIED WHILE BEGGING HELL JOE TO SPARE HER.
BECAUSE... SHE WAS NOT MEANT TO DIE HERE.

HELL JOE...
THAT MAN...
IS DEFYING
DESTINY.

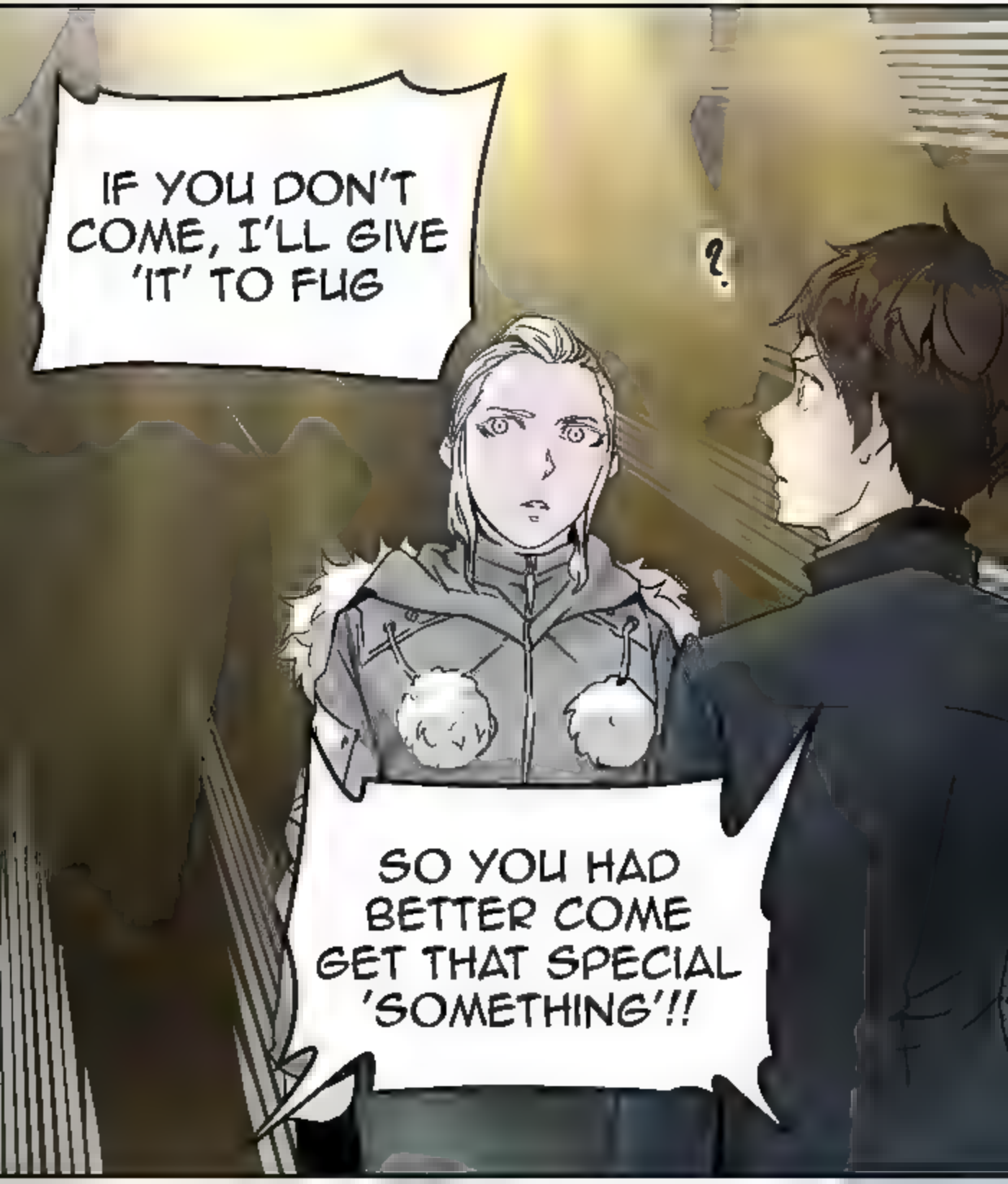
AHH-!!
THIS IS AN ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE INTRUDERS IN THIS PLACE-!!
WOONG—
WOONG—
?!

I AM HELL JOE, THE RULER OF THE SOUTH CITY!!
HELL JOE...?!


I DON'T KNOW WHO LET YOU INTO THIS PLACE
WOONG
WOONG
BUT I KNOW THAT YOU CAME HERE BECAUSE YOU'RE AFTER 'SOMETHING.'

JOE...?
INTRUDERS..? IS HE TALKING ABOUT THAT MAN?
AND THE THING THAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR IS INSIDE MY CASTLE!!

SO SPARE ME THE GAME OF HIDE-AND-SEEK AND COME FIGHT ME!
IF YOU ENTER MY CASTLE AND DEFEAT BOTH MY SERVANTS AND ME
I WILL GIVE YOU WHAT YOU WANT!!


IF YOU DON'T COME, I'LL GIVE 'IT' TO FUG
?
SO YOU HAD BETTER COME GET THAT SPECIAL 'SOMETHING'!!

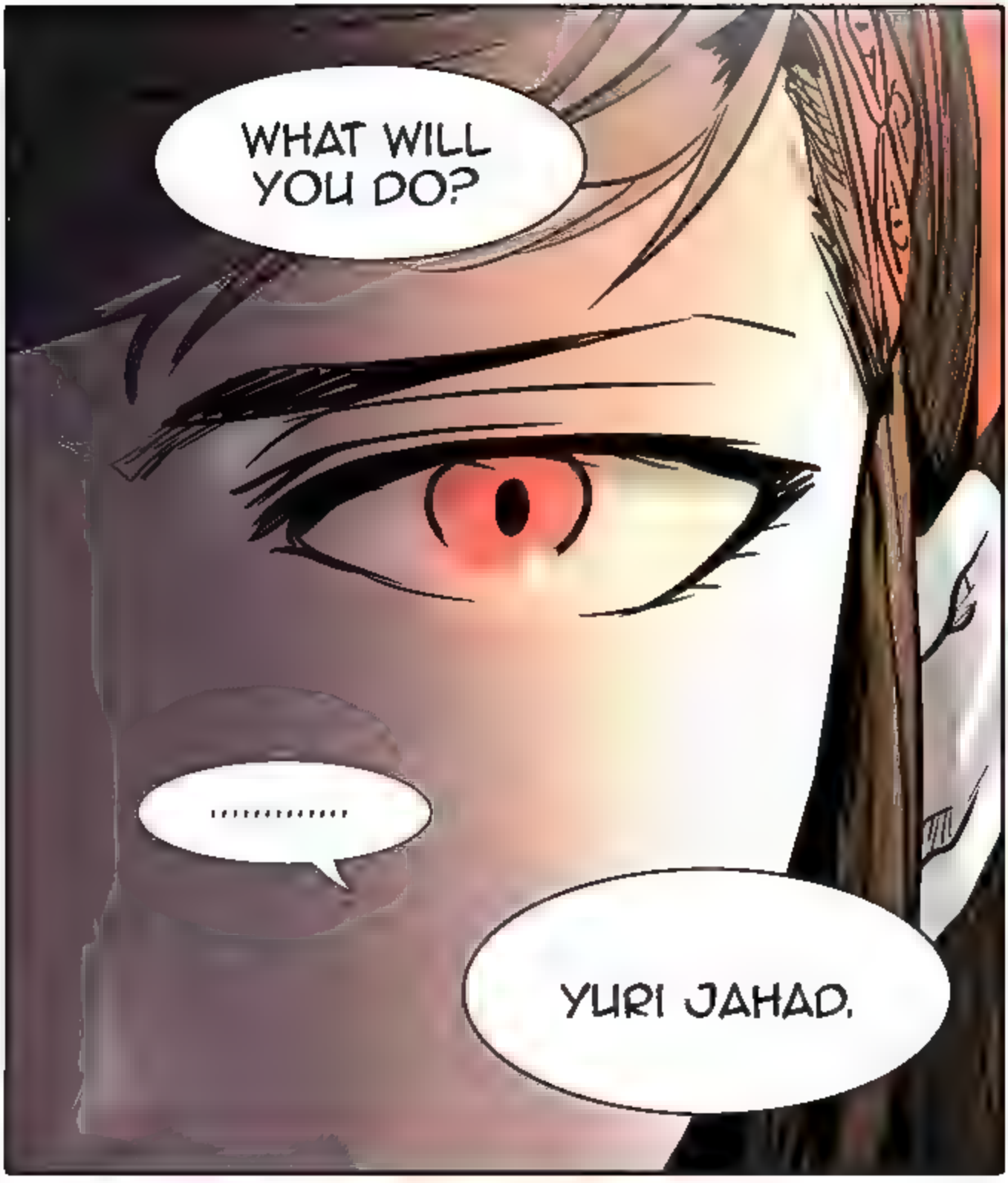
KRRRRRRRRRR
I HOPE YOU GUYS ARE STRONG ENOUGH TO MAKE THIS FUN FOR ME.
THAT'S ALL!!

...THE THORN FRAGMENT..
IS IN HIS CASTLE?

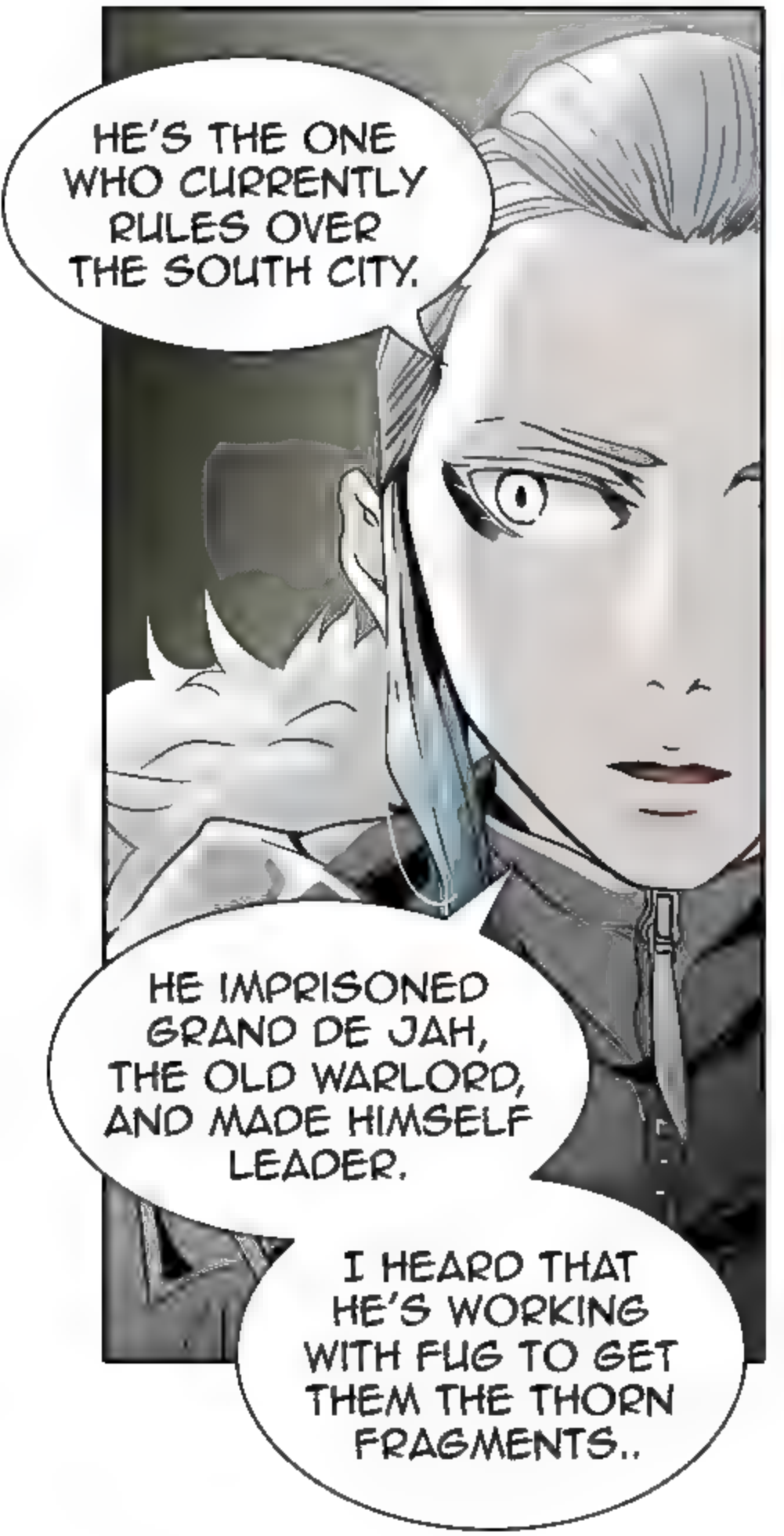
HELL JOE... WHAT IS HE TALKING ABOUT?
THE THING THAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR IS IN HIS CASTLE?
I FEEL LIKE HE'S GOING TO BE MORE OF A NUISANCE THAN I THOUGHT...

IT SOUNDS LIKE HE'S SAYING THAT HE HAS THE THORN FRAGMENT.
!!
THE THORN FRAGMENT, IN HELL JOE'S CASTLE?!

WELL... IT'S PROBABLY A TRAP.
BUT I ASKED YOU TO GET RID OF HELL JOE AS A FAVOR.
IF THE THORN FRAGMENT REALLY IS IN HIS CASTLE, THAT JUST GIVES YOU ONE MORE REASON TO GO AND FIGHT HELL JOE.
VIOLE WILL PROBABLY GO THERE, TOO..


WHAT WILL YOU DO?
.....
YURI JAHAD.

HELL JOE..
HE'S STARTING TO STIR UP TROUBLE.
HELL JOE...?

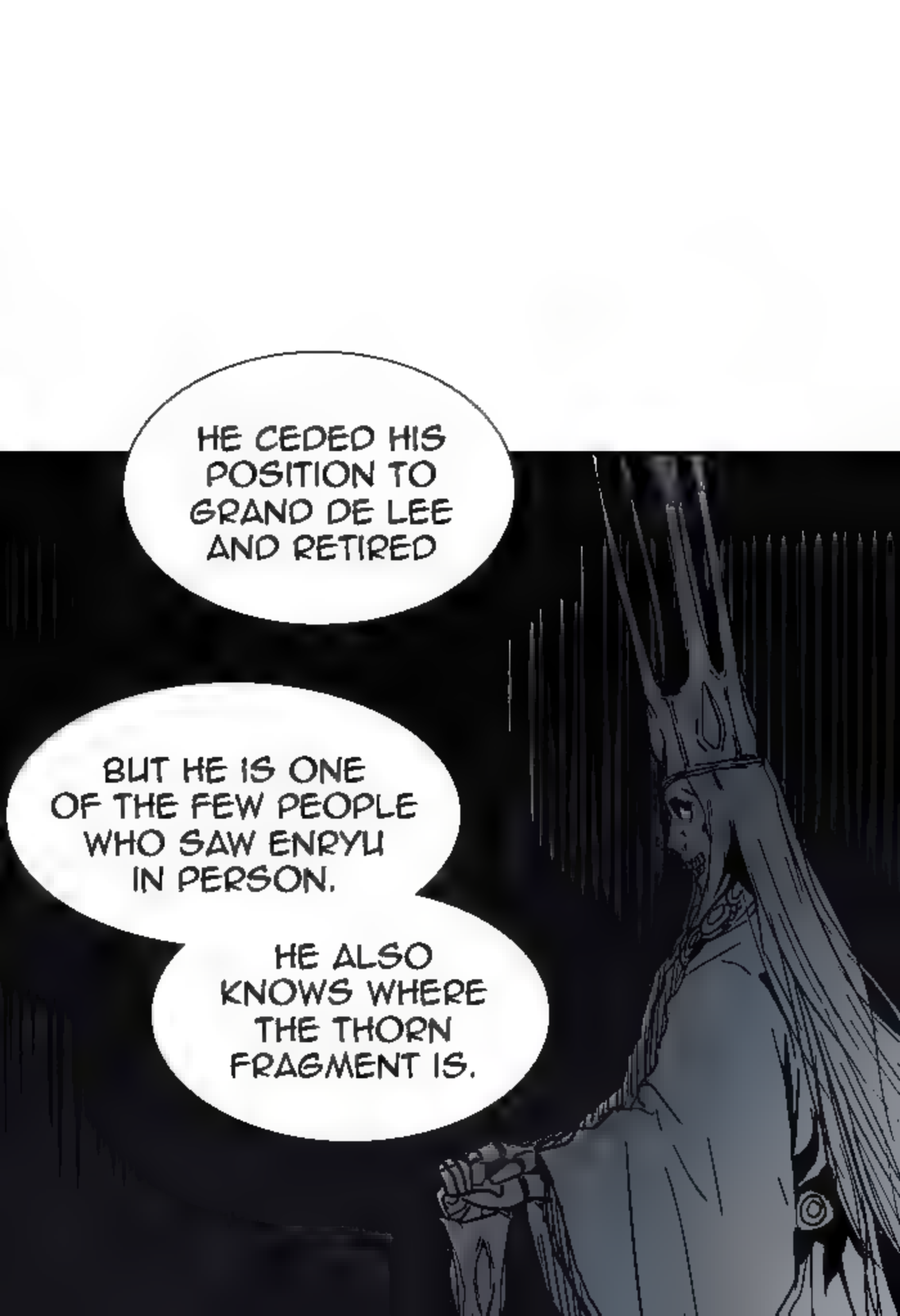

HE'S THE ONE WHO CURRENTLY RULES OVER THE SOUTH CITY.
HE IMPRISONED GRAND DE JAH, THE OLD WARLORD, AND MADE HIMSELF LEADER.
I HEARD THAT HE'S WORKING WITH FUG TO GET THEM THE THORN FRAGMENTS..

HE'S GIVING THEM.. THE THORN FRAGMENTS?
THAT'S RIGHT. HE'S WORKING WITH FUG AND GIVING THEM THE THORN IN ORDER TO ESCAPE TO THE OUTSIDE.
ALTHOUGH HE'S HAVING A TOUGH TIME RIGHT NOW BECAUSE HE CAN'T FIND THE LAST ONE.

THERE'S NO WAY THAT THE FINAL GATEKEEPER TOLD HELL JOE ABOUT YOU ENTERING HERE..
SO THOSE ONES WHO ENTERED THIS PLACE WITH YOU MUST BE ALIVE.
I'M IMPRESSED THAT THEY'RE STILL ALIVE.
.....?
FOR NOW, SHALL WE LET THEM DEAL WITH HELL JOE...?

WHAT HELL JOE SAID JUST NOW IS A LIE.
THE LAST REMAINING THORN FRAGMENT IS HERE IN THE 'NORTH CITY.'
!!
IT'S HIDDEN DEEP INSIDE THE SPIRIT ROOM.

THERE'S A PLACE CALLED THE SPIRIT ROOM HERE IN THE NORTH CITY.
IT'S A PLACE WHICH CONTAINS THE SOULS OF EVERYONE ON THE FLOOR OF DEATH.
'GRAND DE JAH,' THE PREVIOUS LEADER OF THE NORTH CITY, IS DEFENDING THE SPIRIT ROOM.


HE CEDED HIS POSITION TO GRAND DE LEE AND RETIRED
BUT HE IS ONE OF THE FEW PEOPLE WHO SAW ENRYU IN PERSON.
HE ALSO KNOWS WHERE THE THORN FRAGMENT IS.

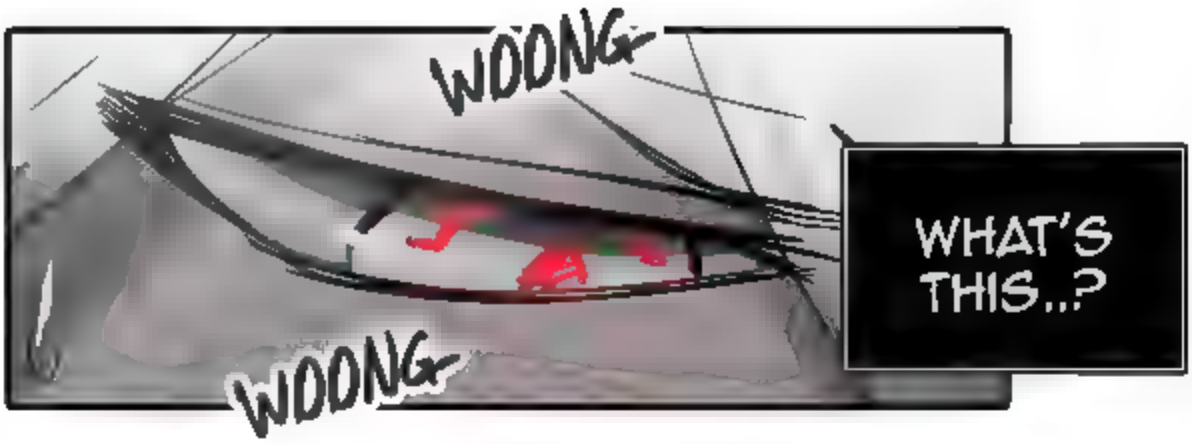
HE'S GOING TO TRY TO TEST YOUR POWER.

IF YOU PASS HIS TEST, YOU WILL FIND OUT WHERE THE FINAL FRAGMENT IS.

!!
BMRG
THIS IS..!!
THE PATH LEADING TO DE JAH'S CASTLE!

WHY HERE...!!
....!!

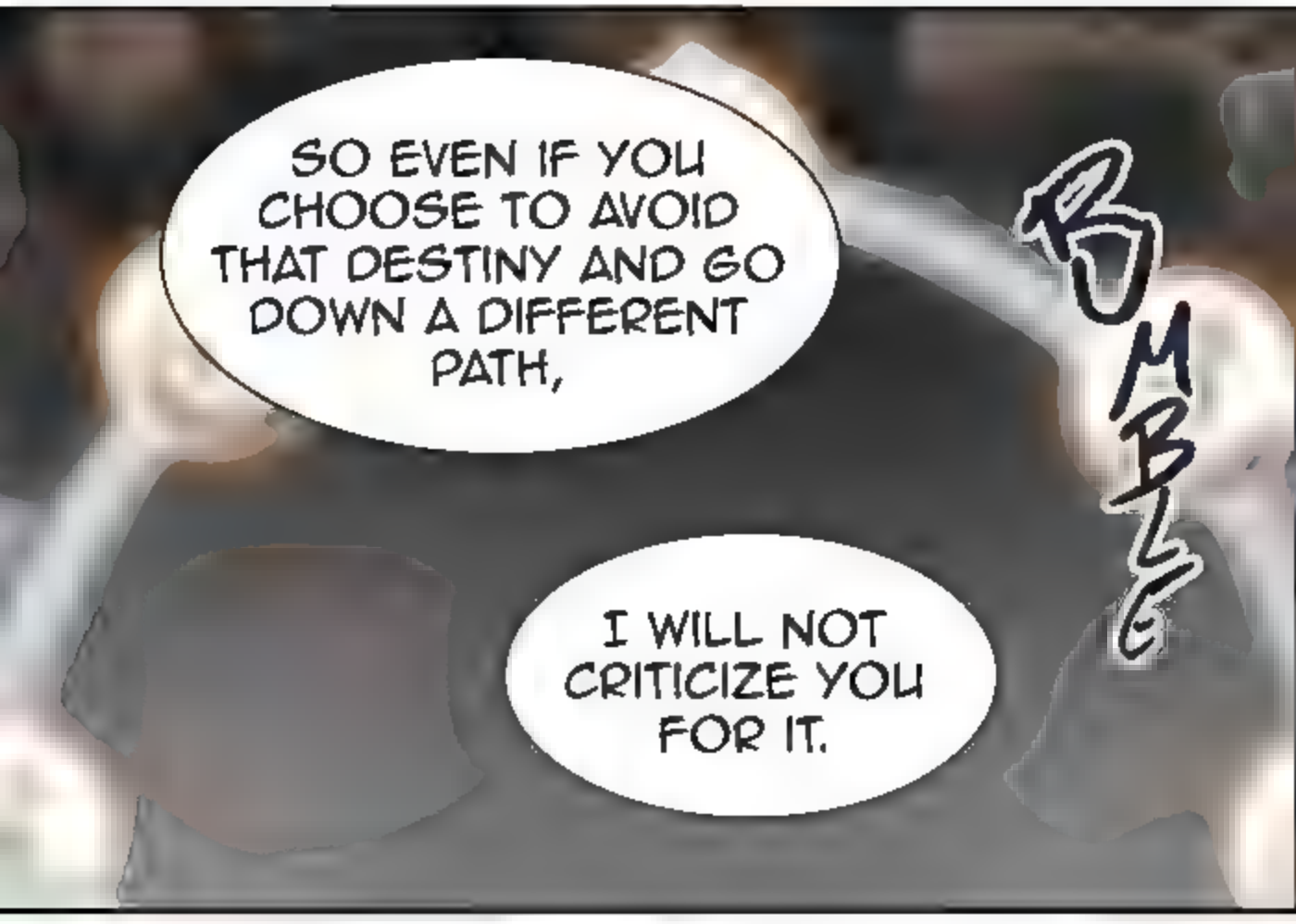
KING
UGH-!!

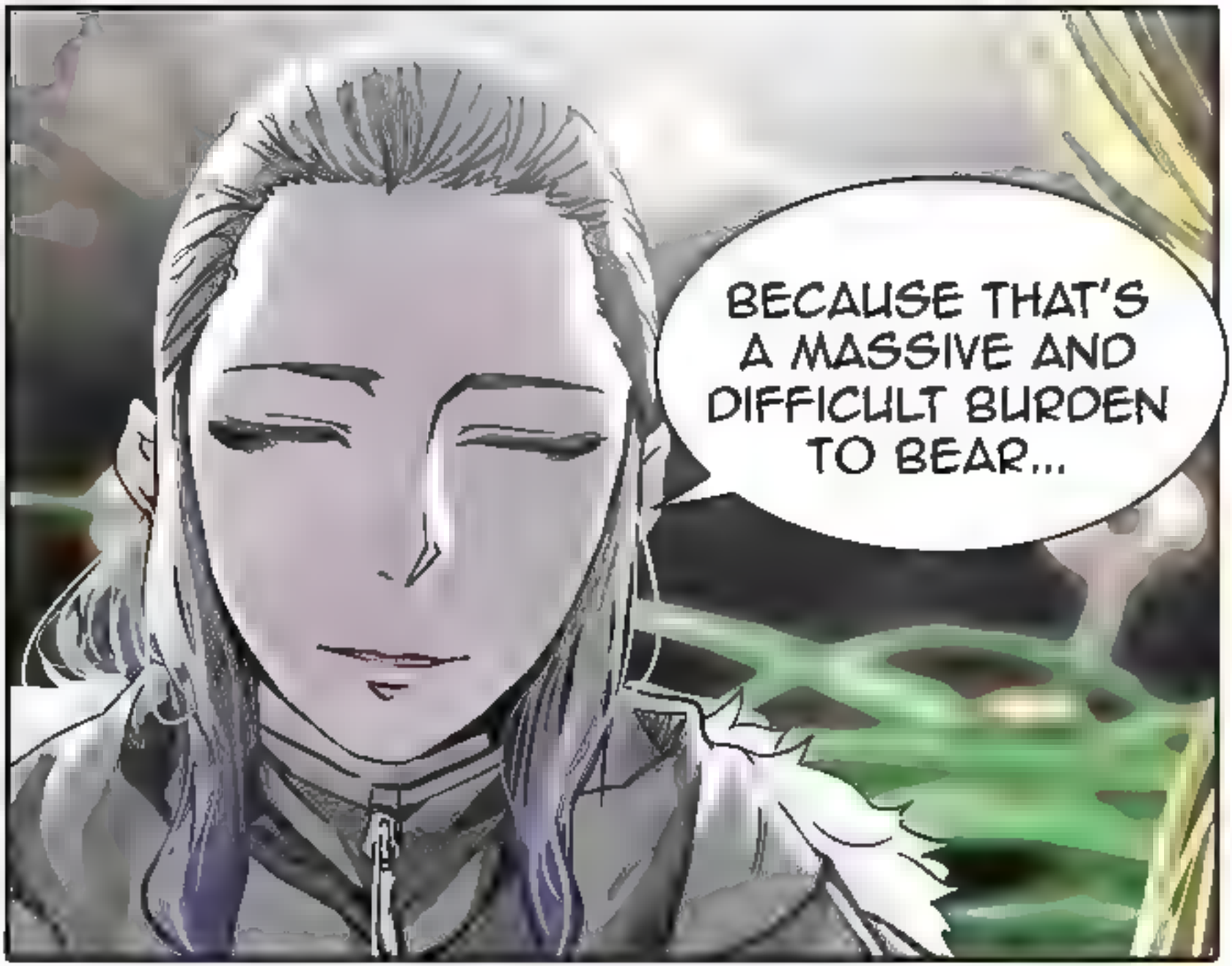

WOONG
WOONG
WHAT'S THIS..?

WOONG
A... MEMORY..?

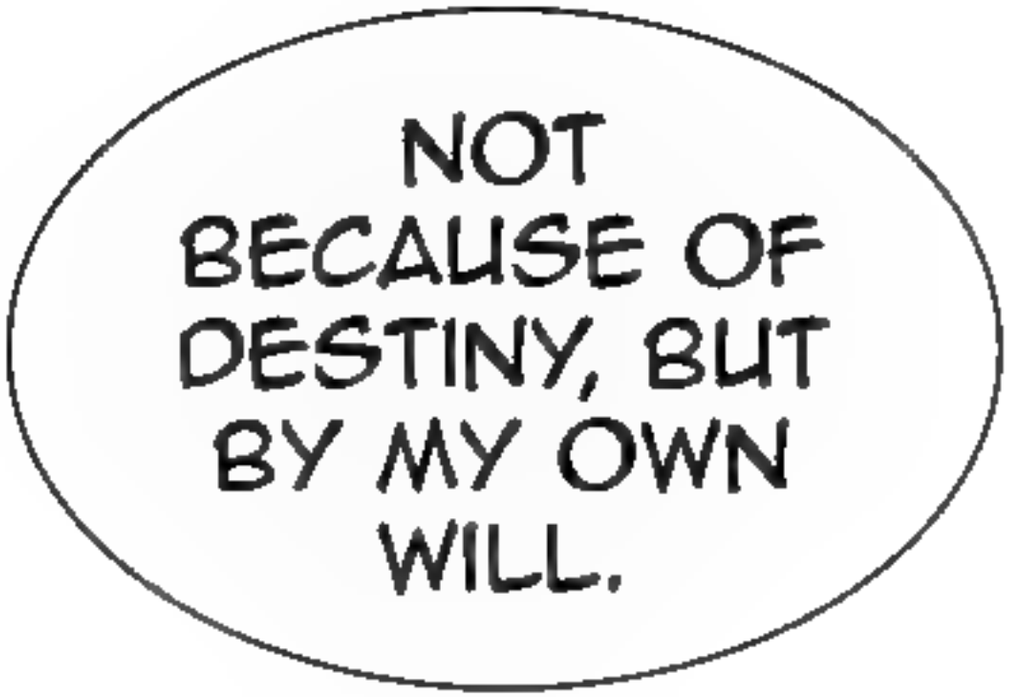
OF COURSE, ORDINARY D-RANK REGULARS COULD NEVER PASS HIS TEST.
SSSK-
BUT IF YOU'RE THE REAL DEAL,
I'M SURE THAT HE WILL ACKNOWLEDGE YOU AND YOU WILL BE ABLE TO FIND THE THORN FRAGMENT.

I KNEW THAT YOU WOULD BE CONFUSED AFTER HEARING WHAT I TOLD YOU.
.....
BUT REGARDLESS OF WHATEVER DESTINY BROUGHT YOU TO THIS PLACE,
IT'S UP TO YOU TO DECIDE WHAT PATH TO TAKE.


SO EVEN IF YOU CHOOSE TO AVOID THAT DESTINY AND GO DOWN A DIFFERENT PATH,
I WILL NOT CRITICIZE YOU FOR IT.
RUMBLE


BECAUSE THAT'S A MASSIVE AND DIFFICULT BURDEN TO BEAR...

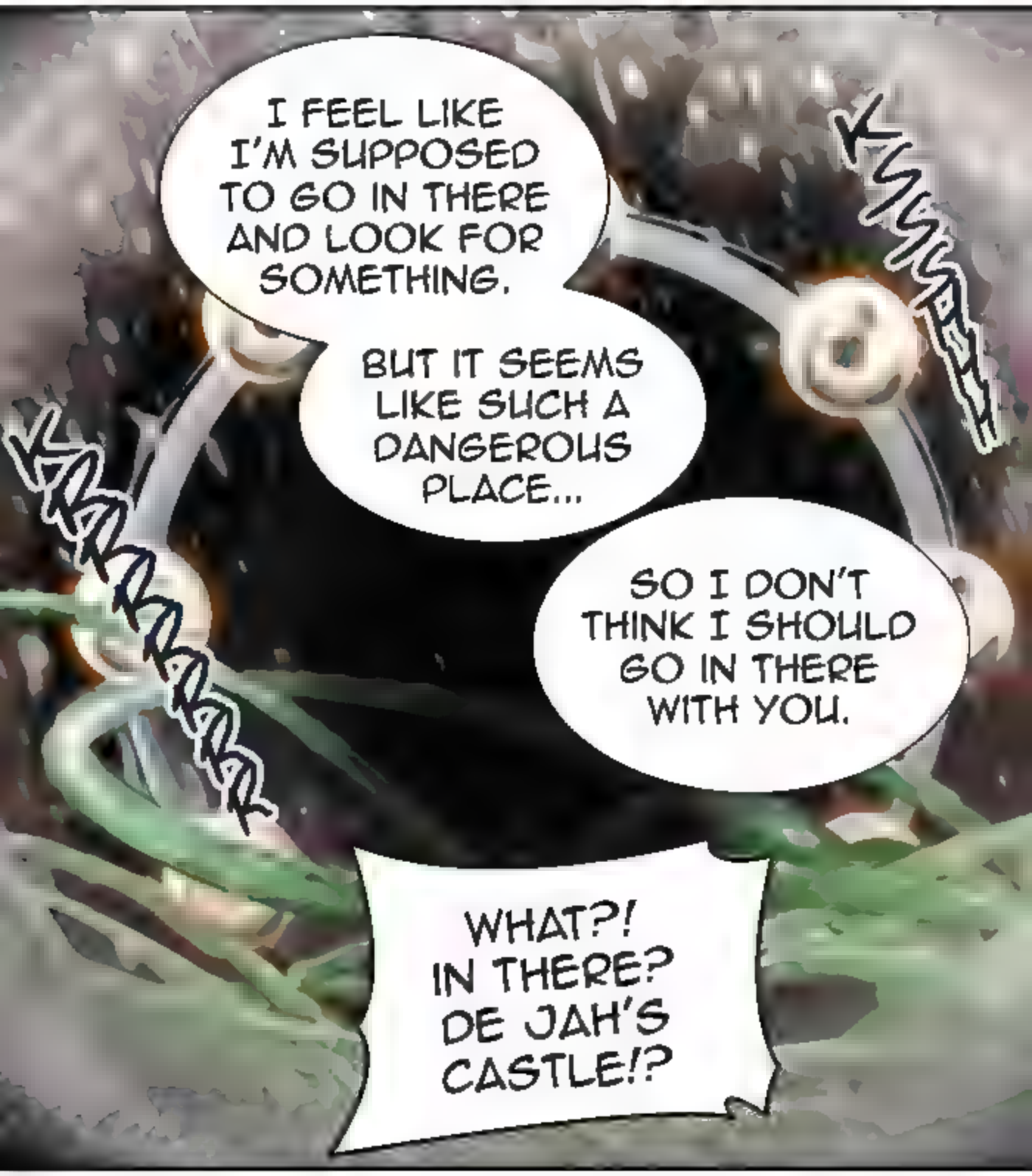
NO...
I'LL... DO IT.

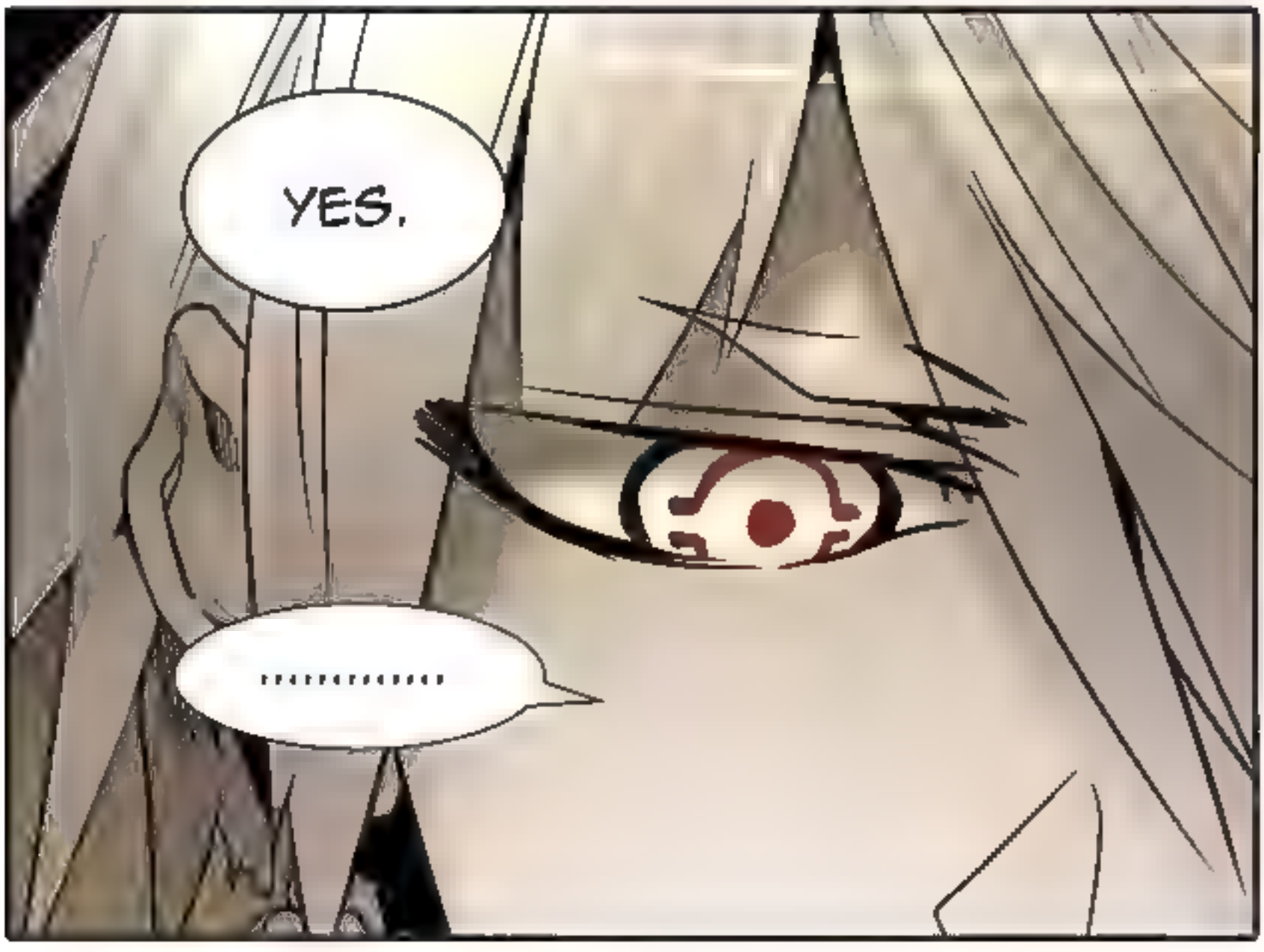

NOT
BECAUSE OF
DESTINY, BUT
BY MY OWN
WILL.

STEP
STEP
!

YOU FINALLY CAME BACK OUT!
WHAT WERE YOU TALKING ABOUT FOR SO LONG?
MATA... STOP ASKING ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE'S BUSINESS...
UM..

I'M SORRY BUT FROM THIS POINT ON
I THINK I SHOULD GO ON BY MYSELF.
HUH...!?

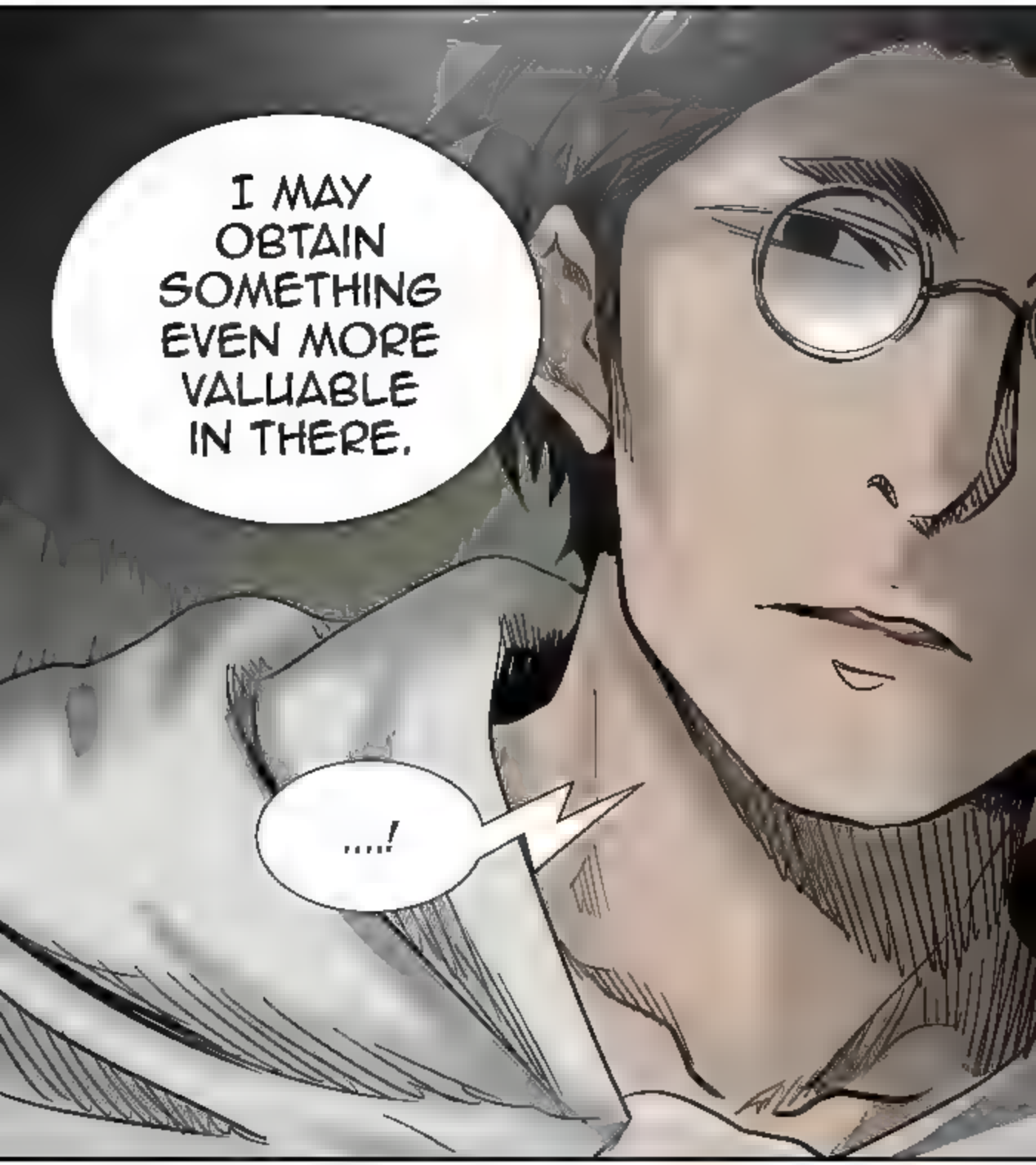

I FEEL LIKE I'M SUPPOSED TO GO IN THERE AND LOOK FOR SOMETHING.
BUT IT SEEMS LIKE SUCH A DANGEROUS PLACE...
SO I DON'T THINK I SHOULD GO IN THERE WITH YOU.
WHAT?! IN THERE? DE JAH'S CASTLE!?
KRAKKAKKAK
KYUUUUU


YES.
.....

CAN'T I GO WITH YOU TOO?
WHAT?
!? HOCKNEY?

BUT THAT PLACE IS...
I KNOW VERY WELL HOW DANGEROUS IT IS.
BUT I HAVE THIS FEELING THAT I SHOULD GO IN THERE TOO...!!

HOCKNEY! ARE YOU INSANE!?
DE JAH IS IN THERE!!
PLUS WHAT ABOUT THE PICTURE!?
..I KNOW. I'M GOING TO FIND THE PICTURE...
AND AS YOU SAID..


I MAY OBTAIN SOMETHING EVEN MORE VALUABLE IN THERE.
....!

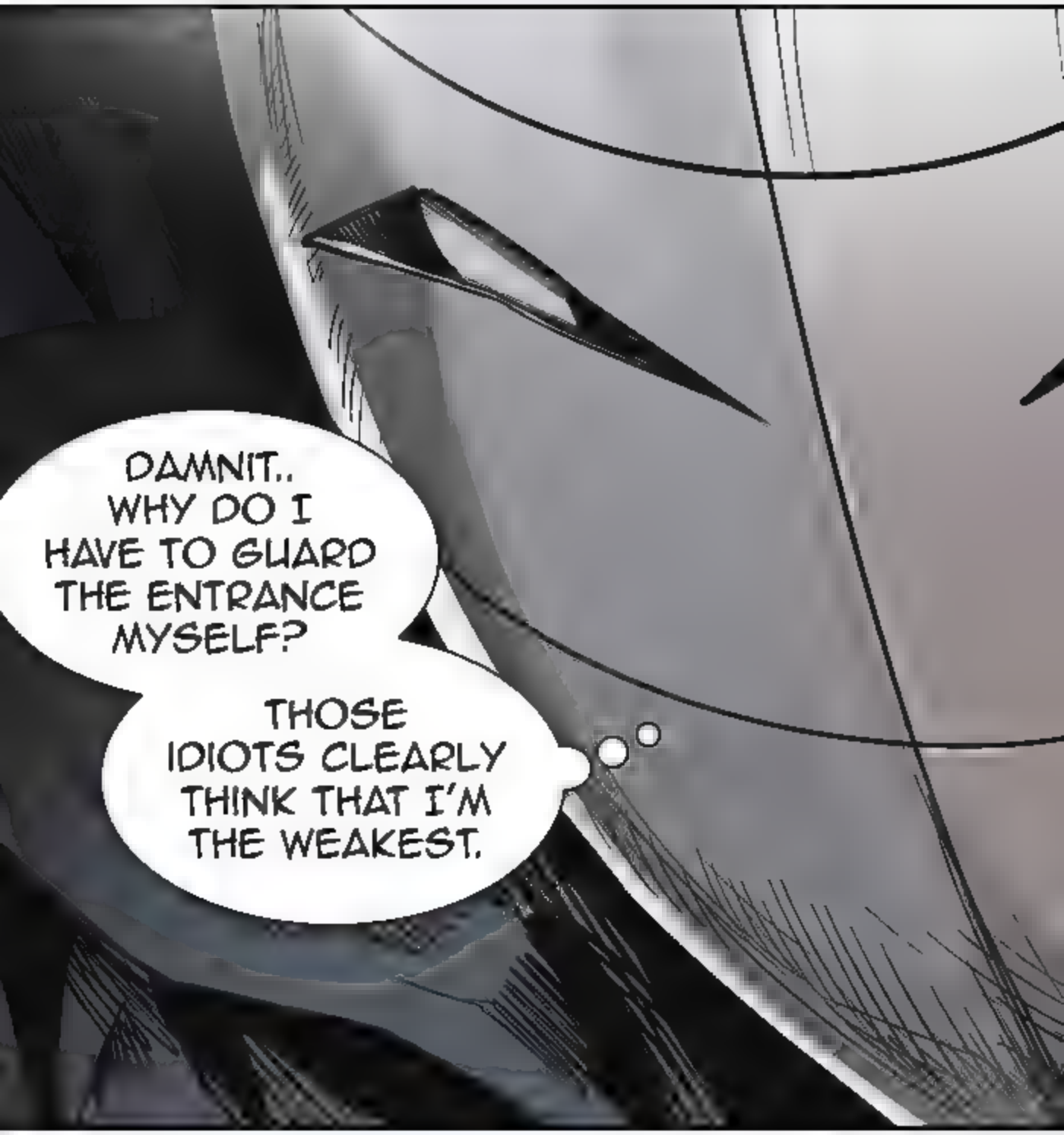
.....
COULD THIS BE DESTINY TOO..?

WELL.. ALRIGHT.
IF YOU'RE GOING THEN I'LL GO TOO, HOCKNEY.
I'VE BEEN IN THERE BEFORE SO LET ME LEAD THE WAY.
!

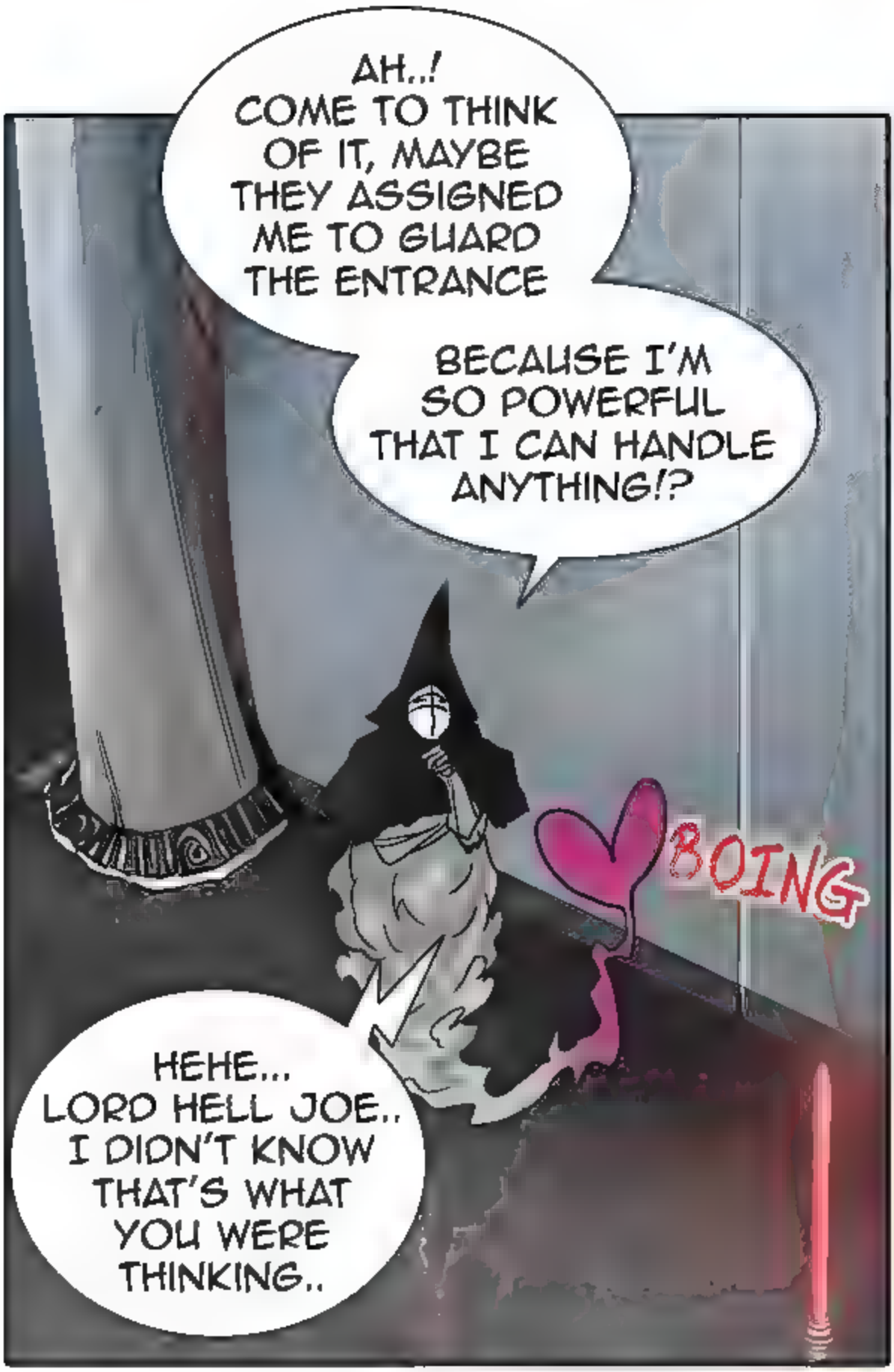
WE'VE ALREADY COME THIS FAR TOGETHER SO I WOULDN'T FEEL RIGHT LETTING YOU GO ALONE.
IT WOULD BE LONELY IF YOU WENT ON YOUR OWN, WOULDN'T IT?
...!!

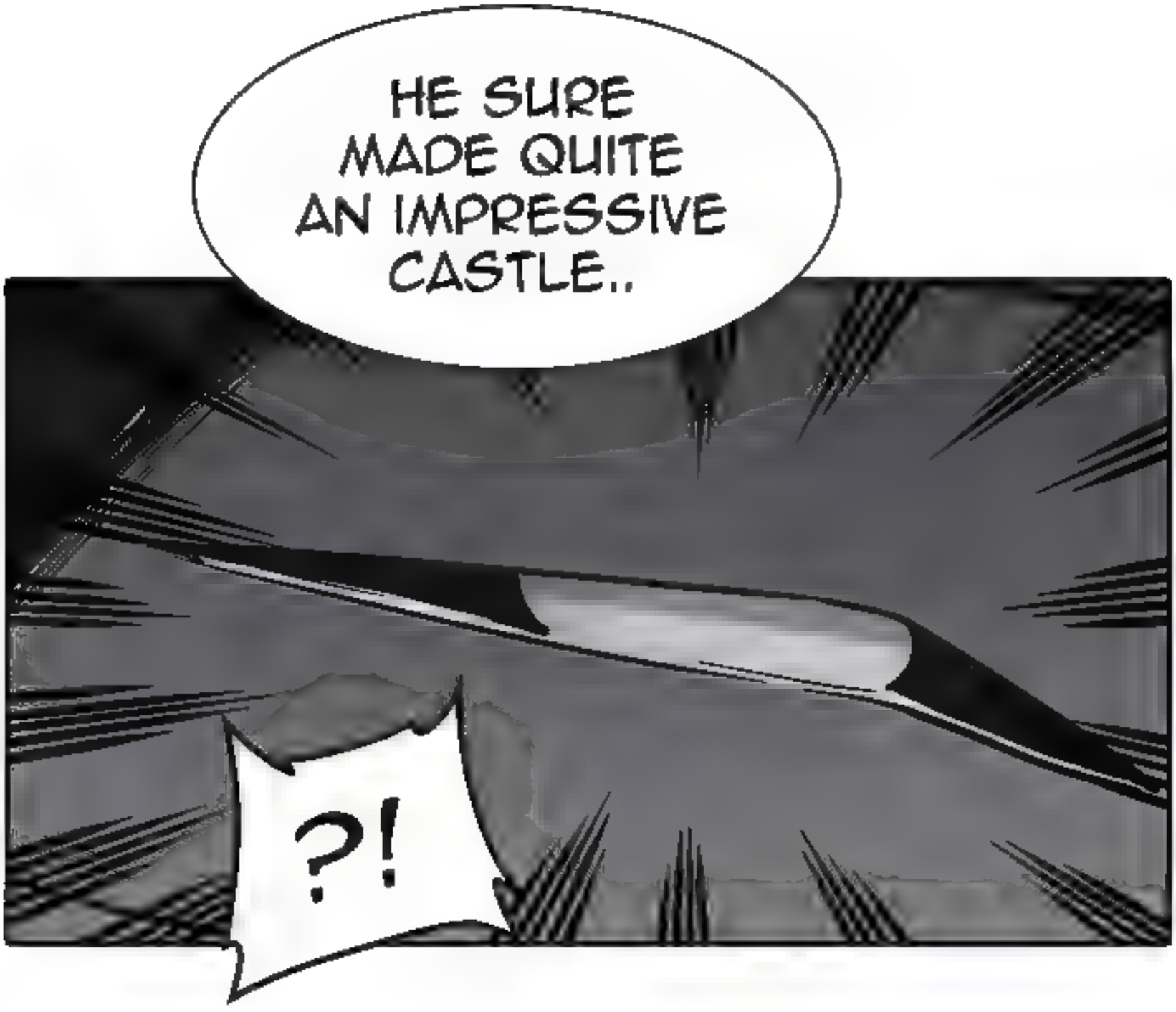
THEN.
LET'S DO THIS TOGETHER!
WHISH—
OKAY!!
PSSHH

THE ENTRANCE TO HELL JOE'S CASTLE
.....


DAMNIT.. WHY DO I HAVE TO GUARD THE ENTRANCE MYSELF?
THOSE IDIOTS CLEARLY THINK THAT I'M THE WEAKEST.

DON'T GET THE WRONG IDEA...
CLENCH
I MAY HAVE BEEN THE WEAKEST BEFORE...
BUT NOW, WITH HELL JOE'S POWER, NO ONE CAN BEAT ME..!!


AH..!
COME TO THINK OF IT, MAYBE THEY ASSIGNED ME TO GUARD THE ENTRANCE
BECAUSE I'M SO POWERFUL THAT I CAN HANDLE ANYTHING!?
BOING
HEHE...
LORD HELL JOE..
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT'S WHAT YOU WERE THINKING..


HE SURE MADE QUITE AN IMPRESSIVE CASTLE..
?!

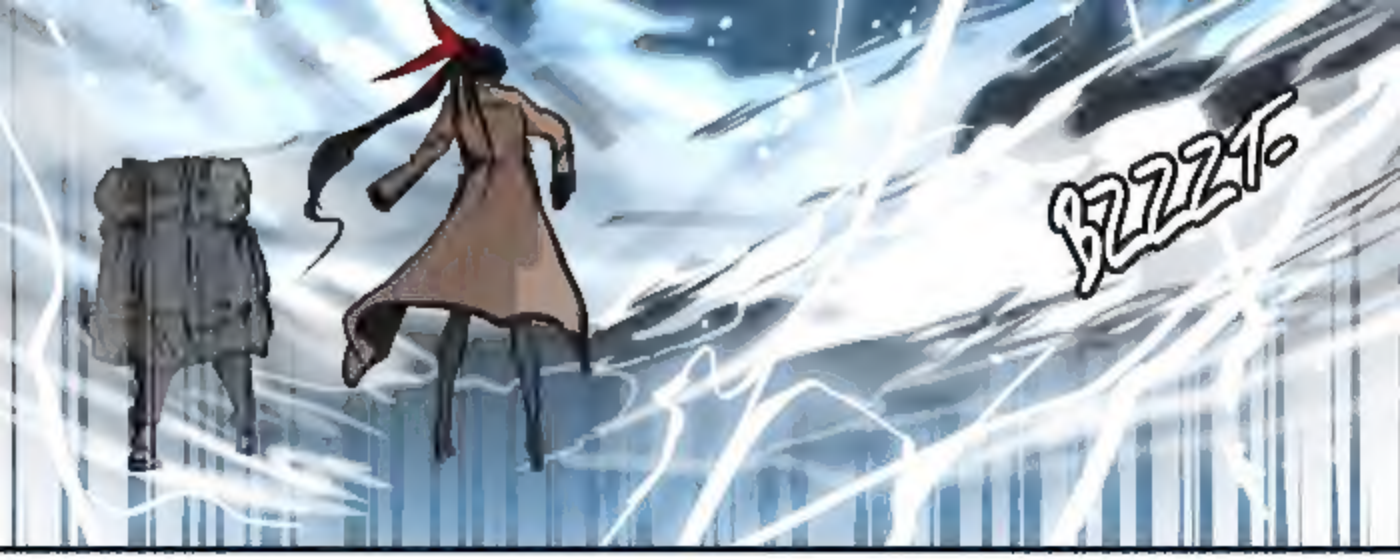
THAT GUY, HELL JOE.
SO THAT'S WHERE HE'S HIDING, HUH...?
STEP-
STEP-
THEY'RE HERE..!!

LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH AND FIND BAM.
SIGH

THE TWO OF YOU ENTERED THIS PLACE ALONE..?!
FLASH

WHOA-
ARE YOU INSANE!?

SHHHHH
BZZT
BZZT


BZZZT-

THAT'S A PRETTY IMPRESSIVE START.
GRIN-

BLNK
YOU HAD BETTER
WIPE THAT SMILE OFF YOUR FACE, 'MORTAL.'
BLNK
BZZT